

Goncourt's opinion of his condition was accurate; for a little later, in August, he collapsed and had to cease work entirely. His friends were very much alarmed, for his weakness "became extreme and a fatal issue seemed possible. But his constitution slowly triumphed over that nervous prostration, and at the end of October, one finds him writing to a friend: " I am a little better. I have been able to get back to work, Nevertheless I am not at all strong. I fancy that something very grave brushed past me but spared me. . . . How heavy is the pen! For the next two or three years I ought to lead the life of an idiot [i. e. a purely animal life without mental exertion] in order to recover my strength. I have become such a coward that the prospect of having to finish my book terrifies me." x

But he compelled himself to resume it, for as is well known he regarded work as the panacea for all evils, physical as well as mental. Thus, by the middle of November, he was able to announce that he had taken up his task again with a sufficiency of courage and intellectual health. It was about this time that M. Charpentier published a volume of his short stories, previously contributed to various periodicals.<sup>2</sup> Moreover " Au Bonheur des Dames " was now appearing serially in the " Gil Bias," which paid twenty

<sup>1</sup> Sherard, *Ic.*, p. 196.

<sup>a</sup> "Le Capitaine Burle," Paris, Charpentier, 18mo; title-pages bear the date 1883, but the book really appeared late in 1882. Besides the story which gave the volume its title, the following figured in it: "Comment on meurt," "Pour une Nuit d'Amour," "Le Feste & Coqueville," "I/Inondation." "Le Capitaine Burle" first appeared in "La Tie Moderne," February, 1881; and the others in "Le Voltaire," 1880. Of the volume twenty-five copies were printed on India, and fifty on Ditch paper. Marpon and Flam-nrnriion added "Le Capitaine Burle" to their illustrated edition of "Therese Hatpin"; and under various titles the other stories figure in their "Collection des Auteurs celebres."